

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION PM-05

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 DOE-11 SOE-02 ACDA-12 OMB-01 IO-13 /108 W
-----117059 020611Z /23

R 011610Z FEB 78
FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5033
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
SECDEF WASH DC
DIA WASH DC
CNO WASH DC
CINCLANDFLT
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GE
USNMR SHAPE BE
CINCUSNAVEUR LONDON UK
COMIDEASTFOR
COMSIXTHFLT
JCS WASH DC

S E C R E T CAIRO 03717

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: OCLR, US, UR
SUBJECT: NUCLEAR POWERED WARSHIP (NPW) TRANSITS OF THE
SUEZ CANAL

REFS: (A)STATE 023171 (DTG 2802267Z JAN 78), (B) 77 CAIRO
21742 (DTG 151633Z DEC 77)

1. INITIAL REVIEW OF PROPOSED DEMARCHE REFTTEL A INDICATES
THAT IT IS WELL DEVELOPED AND SHOULD BE USEFUL IN RESOLVING
THE PROBLEM OF CANAL TRANSITS BY NPW.

2. AS REPORTED REFTTEL B CONVERSATION WITH MINWAR
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STRESSED ACCESS TO ALEX. IT WAS HE WHO MENTIONED THAT
DREADNAUGHT NOT APPROVED FOR CANAL TRANSIT BECAUSE
SCIENTIFIC ADVISORS WERE CONCERNED THAT GOE HAD NO MEANS
TO TEST FOR CONTAMINATION. WE KNOW FROM UK DATT THAT
DECISION WAS MADE AT VERY HIGH LEVEL TO SUGGEST THAT UK
WITHDRAW TRANSIT REQUEST BECAUSE QUOTE A COMMITTEE WAS
STUDYING WHOLE MATTER OF NUCLEAR POWERED VESSELS TRANSIT-

ING THE CANAL UNQUOTE. BASED ON WHAT TRANSPIRED BEFORE, UK DATT STILL CONSIDERS TIME NOT RIGHT FOR FURTHER UK REQUEST. HOWEVER, I RECOGNIZE USG INTEREST IN UNRESTRICTED NPW TRANSITS OF THIS INTERNATIONAL WATERWAY, AND WILL PROCEED AS RAPIDLY AS POSSIBLE TO SEEK A SOLUTION. IF IT WERE SOLELY A POLITICAL QUESTION, I BELIEVE CASE-BY-CASE TRANSITS IN SUPPORT OF USG/GOE COMMON INTERESTS (FOR EXAMPLE IN HORN AREA) COULD EASILY BE OBTAINED. UNRESTRICTED TRANSIT MAY, HOWEVER, BE MORE DIFFICULT.

3. ASSUMING THE DEMARCHE WILL NEED TO BE DISCUSSED WITH MINWAR OR HIGHER, FOLLOWING TYPES OF QUESTIONS MAY BE RAISED. WOULD APPRECIATE HAVING BEST POSSIBLE ANSWERS.

- A. WHAT IS USG POLICY CONCERNING TRANSIT OF PANAMA CANAL BY NPW?
- B. WHY DO NPW ANCHOR OUTSIDE ALEXANDRIA IF A CANAL TRANSIT CONSIDERED TOTALLY SAFE?
- C. DOES USG RESTRICT IN ANY WAY TRANSIT OF NPW NEAR HEAVILY POPULATED ISLANDS OR POINTS OF LAND?

4. STUDY OF MATERIAL AVAIL TO ALUSNA ON POST PROVIDES DEFINITIVE GUIDANCE ON BERTH AND ANCHORAGE SELECTION BUT DOES NOT SEEM TO ADDRESS NPW UNDERWAY IN CONFINED AREAS. SUBJECT MATERIAL WELL STATES US NPW REACTORS ARE SAFE FROM EXPLOSION AND ACCIDENTAL RADIATION TRANSFER TO REACTOR COOLING WATER. IT THUS APPEARS THAT TRACEABLE
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LEVELS MIGHT APPEAR ONLY IN CONFINED AREAS WHERE WATER CIRCULATION SLUGGISH AND THEN ONLY AFTER EXTENDED PERIODS OF NPW BEING STATIONARY, AS OPPOSED TO BRIEF TRANSIT THROUGH EVEN A SLOW FLUSHING AREA SUCH AS THE SEA LEVEL SUEZ CANAL OR THE LOCK-CONTROLLED PANAMA CANAL.

5. SINCE SAFETY A STATED CONCERN OF THE GOE, IT MIGHT BE BENEFICIAL TO OUR CASE IF IT WERE POSSIBLE TO OFFER (AS QUID) THE INSTRUMENTS AND TRAINING NECESSARY FOR GOE TO ESTABLISH A VIABLE CAPABILITY TO DETECT EXCESSIVE RADIATION IF EVER PRESENT. SINCE COST AND COMPLEXITIES OF SUCH CAPABILITY ARE UNKNOWN HERE, REQUEST COMMENT.

6. AMBASSADOR IS RETURNING WASHINGTON ON CONSULTATIONS IN CONNECTION SADAT VISIT AND WILL BE THERE FOR ABOUT A WEEK. HE WILL WANT TO DISCUSS SUBJECT WITH INTERESTED DEPT AND DOD OFFICIALS IN ORDER ENABLE HIM TAKE UP MATTER WITH SENIOR GOE OFFICIALS UPON HIS RETURN. EILTS

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: NUCLEAR POWERED SHIPS, CANALS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 01 feb 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978CAIRO03717
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780049-0717
Format: TEL
From: CAIRO
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t197802108/aaaadndo.tel
Line Count: 112
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 487708ce-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION PM
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 STATE 23171, 77 CAIRO 1
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 25 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3446713
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: NUCLEAR POWERED WARSHIP (NPW) TRANSITS OF THE SUEZ CANAL
TAGS: OCLR, MPOL, US, UR
To: STATE LONDON
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/487708ce-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014